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Cuban Missile Crisis Meetings
October 27, 1962



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Ball: Yeah.

(mixed voices)

McNamara: Well, I think you have two alternatives

(mixed voices)

Bundy: I missed your statement: I have to ask you to say it again.

Ball: I'd say, sure, we'll accept your offer. If this is a matter of grave concern to you, and you equate these things, which we don't but if you do, ok, we can work it out. We're going to put Polaris in the Mediterranean because you've got the whole seas to range in, and we can't keep you out of the ocean...

Bundy: And what's left of NATO?

Ball: I don't think NATO is going to be wrecked, and if NATO isn't any better than that, it isn't that good to us.

Dillon: What happens to the missiles in Cuba over the next three weeks, while this is going on?

Ball: Well, I mean, if you do this, you do it on the basis of an immediate trade and they immediately...

Voice: And surveillance

Ball: And surveillance

(mixed voices)

Voice: What you do, with the Turks and NATO, you go through the propositions that Bob has outlined here.

McNamara: Let me suggest this: let's get the message ready on the assumption that either the Soviet don't want a trade or we don't want a trade, one or the other, and hence the trade route of Jupiters in Turkey for missiles in Cuba is not acceptable, and therefore we're going to attack Cuba. Now, let's follow that and get a message written on that basis. Before we attack Cuba we're going to reduce the danger to Turkey to a minimum.

(mixed voices)

Bundy: I'd like to see both of these messages written. (Words unclear). I think they both need to be written.

McNamara: But Mac, this other course will in a sense be that, so -- let's get first the message written on the assumption that...

Ball: (words unclear) write that. And I'll go write the other.

Bundy: Joe, let me speak to you for a moment.

RFK: (words unclear) a chance to do an (words unclear) like that I think it's worth while.

(mixed voices)

Bundy: You want to write one, or do you want me to draft it or what do you want to do (words unclear). I'll get a draft (mixed voices)

Voice: Who's it to, Bob?

McNamara: Well it's going to go to three parties. It's going to go to the Turks, to the heads of government of NATO countries, and the North Atlantic Council -- same message in effect.

(Pause)

Voice: Do people want dinner downstairs, or on trays, or do you want to wait?

Voice: Let's wait. Let's

(Pause)

McNamara: We probably ought to think about the course of action in the next two or three days, what we're going to (words unclear and other noises). Max is going back to work out the surveillance problem for tomorrow with the Chiefs and see how much cover we need and so on. So we're just going to get shot up sure as hell. There's no question about it. We're going to have to go in and shoot. We can carry this on I would think a couple of days, maybe three days, possibly even four. But we're going to lose planes. We had eight planes going out today. Two aborted for mechanical reasons. Two went through safely and returned, and four ran into fire.

(mixed voices)

McCone: You know, it seems to me we're missing a bet here. I think that we ought to take this case to -- send directly to Khrushchev by fast wire the most violent protest, and demand that he -- that he stop this business and stop it right away, or we're going to take those SAM-sites out immediately. That's what I'd tell him. I'd tell him this is a -- I'd just use one of the (mixed voices) messages he sends us, and I'd send it right off, and if he won't -- and I'd trade these Turkish things out right now. I wouldn't even talk to anybody about it. We sat for a week, and everybody was in favor of doing it, and I'd make that part of the message. I'd tell him we're going to conduct surveillance, as announced by the President, and one shot and in we come, and he can expect it. If he wants to sit down and talk about this thing, he can call off his gunfire and do it right away.

McNamara: Well, I think that we can assume that that kind of an approach will be made -- ex the -- I think we can assume an approach to trade the missiles will be made one way or another. He'll know that. But now let's assume that that's made and time goes by and nothing happens and we're losing airplanes. What -- what do we do there?

Dillon: Well, I mean this is a job for the...

(mixed voices)

McNamara: Let's assume that the approach is made...

Voice: And he doesn't do it.

McNamara: Either he doesn't do it or he comes back -- let me go back a second. When I read that message of last night this morning, I thought, My God I'd never sell -- I'd never base a transaction on that contract. Hell, that's no offer. There's not a damned thing in it that's an offer. You read that message carefully. He didn't propose to take the missiles out. Not once -- there isn't a single word in it that proposes to take the missiles out. It's twelve pages of -- of fluff.

Voice: Well his message this morning wasn't...

(mixed voices)

McNamara: Well, no, I'm speaking of the last-night message. The last-night message was twelve pages of fluff. That's no

contract. You couldn't sign that and say we know what we signed. And before we got the damned thing read the whole deal changed -- completely changed. All of which leads me to conclude that the probabilities are that nothing's going to be signed quickly. Now my question is, assuming nothing is signed quickly, what do we do. (Pause) Well, I don't think attack is the only answer. I think we ought to be prepared for attack, all-out attack, but I think we ought to know how far we can postpone that. But I don't think that's the only answer, and we ought to think of some other answers here. Now John's suggestion, I think, is obviously one -- to try to negotiate a deal.

McCone: I wouldn't try to negotiate a deal. (mixed voices) I'd send him a threatening letter. I'd say, you've made public an offer. We'll accept that offer. But you shot down a plane today before we even had a chance to send you a letter, despite the fact that you knew that we were sending unarmed planes on a publicly announced surveillance. Now we're telling you, Mr. Khrushchev, this just one thing, that we're sending unarmed planes over Cuba. If one of them is shot at, we're going to take the installations out, and you can expect it. And therefore, you issue an order immediately.

Voice: Right.

McCone: And I'd be prepared to follow that up.

McNamara: But what I'd do is disassociate that from the Turkish missiles, John, that's part of your message that I would...

McCone: No, I wouldn't because then the pressure get's (word unclear) he get another proposal. He'll have Berlin thrown in. (low voices)

McCone: He'll get something else thrown in tomorrow. He'll get Berlin. That's what I think.

McNamara: Well, I think that's possible. (words unclear) That's possible. That's why I think we have to be prepared for attack. (mixed voices)

McNamara: Let's go down and try and draft, get this (words unclear) just so we have later tonight some alternative here.

Voice: Draft it and meet here later. (mixed voices)

(The meeting breaks up, and many leave; probably the President has left somewhat earlier. There follows sporadic low-voiced conversation until Rusk returns, and the Vice President and Rusk and Dillon begin to talk with each other. After a routine review for Johnson of the public steps of the day so far, the conversation continues after comments on the surveillance problem that are not clear.)

LBJ: I've been afraid of these damned flyers ever since they mentioned them. Just an ordinary plane goin' in there at two or three hundred feet without arms or an announcement. If they get -- four of them had to turn back because of (words unclear) Imagine some crazy Russian captain would be looking (words unclear) our skies. He might just pull a trigger. Looks like we're playing Fourth of July over there or something. I'm scared

planes

conflict?

of that, and I don't see -- I don't see what you get for that photograph that's so much more important than what you -- you know they're working at night; you see them working at night. Now what do you do? Psychologically you scare them. Well, Hell, it's like the fellow telling me in Congress, "Go on and put the monkey on his back." Every time I tried to put a monkey on somebody else's back I got one. If you're going to try to psychologically scare them with a flare you're liable to get your bottom shot at.

Rusk: What is George Ball doing?

Voice: He's drafting.

LBJ: He (words unclear). He says that if you're going to -- you ought to accept the trade if you're going to give up the Turkish bases, that you ought to say, ok, we'll give them up for Cuba. McNamara says tell them we'll give them up for nothing. That's the way I see it. There are two sides. (words unclear) McNamara says if we're going to hit Cuba, we've got to say to the Turks that we want you to give up your Jupiters, and we'll give you Polaris instead. Ball said, well if you're going to do that, just say to Mr. Khrushchev, Yes to your proposal today. So he's drafting (mixed voices) to take the two proposals, McNamara, s drafting one, Ball drafting the other, both of them coming back with the two. (mixed voices).

Dillon: Here is the third thing which is really the Ball line, plus McCone's ultimatum idea about surveillance. (reading)

Mr. Chairman:

We've reached a moment of utmost gravity. Your forces in Cuba have fired on our unarmed planes conducting surveillance in accordance with the resolution of the OAS. You have done this before I had an opportunity to reply to your letter of this morning, offering to remove your offensive weapons from Cuba in return for the removal of similar weapons from Turkey. This suggestion of yours requires consultation with our NATO allies. I am undertaking such consultation and am recommending that our allies agree to the removal of the Jupiter missiles from Turkey at the same time that your missiles are removed from Cuba. Meanwhile it is essential that these weapons be made inoperable immediately. Until this is done.

Rusk: The weapons in Cuba.

Dillon: Yeah. Until this is done, subject to reasonable international control, we must continue our unarmed aerial surveillance in Cuba. If these planes -- or again these unarmed planes -- he keeps saying that -- if these unarmed planes are again fired upon, we will be required to respond with all the necessary force. The decision, Mr. Chairman, is yours. If you give orders to your forces in Cuba to cease interference with our unarmed planes, if you agree -- uh -- to immediately render the offensive weapons in Cuba inoperable, the way to peace is open. Otherwise we will be forced to act.

(Pause)

Rusk: What do you think?

LBJ: I think he's got a point. I think you're going to have a big problem right here internally, in a few more hours, in this country, (words unclear) all over the country, States of the Union, what have you done, what are you doing? The President made a fine speech. What else have you done?

Rusk: Meaning (words unclear) they want more action?

LBJ: They don't know what we're doing. They see that there are some ships coming through. There's a great feeling of insecurity. I told you the other day before these fellows came in they're reflecting it. They're going to be saying I told you, tomorrow or the next day...

Rusk: What would be the effect, in the country, of accepting the Turkish (word unclear)?

LBJ: I don't know.

(reels change; gap of time, length unknown)

[End Meeting Item 41A.1, Reference
Reel 2. Meeting continued on
Meeting Item 42.1]

Meeting Item 42.1

[Meeting continued from Meeting
Item 41A.1, Reference Reel 2]

LBJ: What -- would you say if you said how you've got the Jupiters and they're lighted up there, the searchlights on them, and everybody knows about them, they're not worth a damn. And we'll take that old T-model out and we'll give you Polaris, a much better job -- and how do you feel? Well, he might feel that we wouldn't come to him.

Rusk: We've got 17,000 men there.

LBJ: (words unclear) So we could say, we're going to come but we've got to hit Cuba, and we think that you're in less danger by pulling down these Jupiters and getting them out of here and having the Polaris than you are in the other way. Now what do you think about it? I think he might...

Dillon: If you do this -- if you at the same time send that message to everybody, you see, which is explaining why, which is the message that's being drafted.

LBJ: I think governments are old and tired and sick. (Pause)

Voice: There may be one angle to it, Mr. Vice President, that may bother them a little bit. A Polaris submarine would be strictly a U.S. organization...

LBJ: I think what'll bother them is that this man in the United States is not coming.

Rusk: But the point is -- the point there is that we're there. Our NATO at the (words unclear) the nuclear aircraft carrier. Are those our planes?

Voice: Yes. Always. There are both U.S. - there are both US aircraft and (words unclear)

LBJ: Well then (words unclear) why don't we try to sell them on that, Mr. Secretary. (words unclear) a couple of things just say now, "You're more likely to get hit this way than you are the other," isn't that true, Tommy?

Thompson: Yeah, actually we'd have better protection (words unclear) obsolete (mixed voices)

Thompson: The trouble with all this is that unless we're absolutely decided that we're going to hit Cuba -- bomb them

? (words unclear) they'll leave their technicians in Cuba and their bombing planes in Cuba and it'll raise a hell of a mess.
(mixed voices)

Voice: Say nuclear weapons, nuclear delivery systems.

Dillon: We're just talking about missiles, because we can't talk about planes. Then we have to take our planes out of Turkey, you see, and we don't want to do that.

Pause

Thompson: The only possible (words unclear) justification for this is (word unclear) bomb.

LBJ: Look you've got to have one plane. They give up Turkey, and then they shoot another -- then they give up Berlin. You know, like a mad dog -- he takes a little blood and he...

(Mixed voices)

Dillon: We haven't run into the basic thing that all of us talked about less than a week ago. We all said that's fine we would (words unclear).

Voice: Cut the base.

Dillon: Well not the base, just the missiles.

Thompson: He's now getting the idea that he can get a lot more. This proposal is that whatever you want out of Cuba, take out of Turkey.

Dillon: Oh I see, what you were talking about a week ago was that they'd take everything out of Cuba, and we'd just take the missiles out of Turkey, whereas now he's saying I'll take missiles out of Cuba, you take missiles out of here. Take airplanes out if you take airplanes out.

(mixed voices)

Thompson: That's why I think any suggestion that we're willing to accept this unless there is an irrevocable decision that we're to take these out by bombing is very dangerous. Because then we'd really be getting nothing but defeat. (words unclear) I can't believe it's necessary. You know, the night before he was willing to take this other line.

(mixed voices)

LBJ: So what happened? Is somebody forcing him to up his ante, or is he trying to just see -- maybe we'll give more -- let's try it, and I can always come back to my original position.

Thompson: Well, I think it's one of two things. Either Khrushchev was overruled and -- or Khrushchev and/or his colleagues were deceived by the Lippmann piece and the fact that Kreisky put this out which made them think that we were putting this out, that we were willing to -- to make a trade.

Dillon: Well, Lippmann can work this thing differently. It's our position to say unless you agree not to shoot at our unarmed planes until these things of yours are inoperable in Cuba, then we're going to have to hit you. The choice is yours.

(mixed voices)

A { A confused discussion of Lippmann's position follows, largely mixed voices.

Thompson: These boys are beginning to give way. Let's push harder. I think they'll change their minds when we take continued forceful action, stopping their ship or -- or taking out a SAM-site. That kills some Russians (words unclear). But if we are not going to shoot any planes that come up or shoot (words unclear).

Dillon: Well, would you rather send them a thing like this which says if they shoot at all you're going to take them all out, or would you rather just go in and take one SAM-site out.

Thompson: I'm inclined to take one because I don't think giving an ultimatum is recommended.

(mixed voices)

LBJ: You warhawks ought to get together.

(pause)

LBJ: Well, if he was motivated by Lippmann's message, why -- is it your theory he got it after he sent his letter last night and before this one this morning?

Thompson: Well, a decision was made after the first letter. The first letter he was wobbling around rather slowly, (words unclear) but that is not to be ignored.

(prolonged mixed voices)

Then there is read, probably by McCone, a longer version of the McCone draft letter. The essential point is the same - all proposals are worth discussing but meantime shooting at planes must stop, work on bases must be halted, missiles rendered inoperable, and ultimately to be removed.

Discussion of McCone draft follows.

(Mixed voices and bad interference)

LBJ: I'm surprised that they've been allowing these planes to go in all these days anyway without any action. (words unclear) Now if we pull out (words unclear) for the last couple of days in the papers. I mean all the old appearances, and I don't think that's good for us. He's looking at it, (words unclear) behind the eight-ball a little bit, and he's got to get a little blood, and he's got it, and now when they realize he's shot down one of our pilots, we're letting their ship go through, and that ship's gone through, and we've had (words unclear). They will know what we're going to be doing. I guess it'll be done tomorrow (words unclear), and they'll shoot and we'll shoot and that's...

(Pause)

(Mixed voices and desultory comments and pauses)

Thompson: The only thing that bothers me at all about it is the -- uh -- you can see that we have two conflicting things here. One is to prepare for action in Cuba, and the other is to get a peaceful solution along the lines which he has proposed. And the purposes are conflicting because if we want to get him to accept the thing that he put in his letter last night, then we shouldn't give any indication that we're ready to talk about the Cuba-Turkish thing. (words unclear) We have to take one of those two courses.

(Pause)

(But JFK didn't really believe that K would buy his proposal, even with ult.

W. RFK/
McC

Ha!
good
question

W.
RFK/Dob

(low voices -- talk of a translation)

Thompson: They've done two things. They've put up the price, and they've escalated...

LBJ: The action.

Thompson: The action. And I think to mention, as McCone does, that we can discuss this other thing, may be to give them a churlish benefit -- and it's an embarrassment, in effect, to Khrushchev. I think it's a further sign of weakness.

Voice: Sir?

Thompson: It's a further sign of weakness to indicate a willingness to talk about this thing which he put out, which was I think (words unclear). This is missile to missile and technician to technician and plane for plane.

LBJ: I guess what he's really saying I'm going to re -- I'm going to discuss the foreign policy of the United States for the last fifteen years in order to -- let you -- uh -- get these missiles out of Cuba. (pause) And we say, we're glad, and we appreciate it, and we want to discuss it with you.

Thompson: How was it left about this last letter to U Thant after Khrushchev (words unclear) to U Thant. Is that not to be made public? Because if we get that out in public, I think that offsets a lot of things we're at present (sic) about the public posture. It would make the Cuban thing -- I mean the Turkish thing -- look good.

(Confused further discussion with heavy extra noises. Where to reassemble? Where is McNamara's draft? More confused voices. Noises.)

LBJ: You just ask yourself what made the greatest impression on you today, whether it was his letter last night or whether it was his letter this morning. Or whether it was his (words unclear) U-2 boys?

Thompson: The U-2.

LBJ: That's exactly right. That's what everybody (words unclear) and that's what's going to make an impression on him.
(mixed voices and other sounds, pause)

JFK: (returning) I'm sorry to keep you. I think we ought to go -- essentially go back to this problem and then when we get these messages to the Turks, the British, and the NATO messages.

Bundy: We have to go back to -- we have to instruct Finletter, we have really to agree on the track, you see, Mr. President and I think there's a very substantial difference of opinion...

LBJ: McNamara is drafting that message.
(mixed voices)

JFK: Let's see what the difference is, and then we can think about that. What is the difference?

Bundy: Well I haven't been in as much of the discussion as some others, Mr President, but I'll ask Mr. Thompson to speak.

Thompson: Well, I can't express his view better than Bob McNamara could do, but -- uh -- I think we clearly have a choice here -- uh -- that either we go on the line that we've decided to attack Cuba and therefore are terribly bound to that, or we try to get

Khrushchev back on the peaceful solution, in which case we shouldn't give any indication that we're going to accept this thing on Turkey, because the Turkish proposal is I should think clearly unacceptable -- missiles for missiles, plane for plane, technician for technician, and it leaves -- if it worked out, it would leave the Russians installed in Cuba, and I think that -- uh -- (word unclear) accept. It seems to me there are many indications that -- uh -- they suddenly thought they could get -- uh -- up the price. They've upped the price, and they've upped the action. And I think that we have to bring them back by upping our action and by getting them back to this other thing without any mention of Turkey. This is bad for us, from the point of view of (words unclear). We have to cover that later, but we're going to surface his first proposal which helps the public position. It gets it back on -- centered on Cuba, and our willingness to accept it. And that -- that somewhat diminishes the need for any talk about -- about Turkey. It seems to me the public will be pretty solid on that, and that we ought to keep the heat on him and get him back on the line which he obviously was on the night before. That message was almost incoherent and showed that they were quite worried, and the Lippmann article and maybe the Kreisky speech has made them think they can get more, and they backed away...

JFK: When did Kreisky make his suggestion about Turkey?

Thompson: In a public speech to a party group.

JFK: And Lippmann had it when?

Bundy: Two days ago.

JFK: Two days ago?

Sorensen: It was in the Washington Post (words unclear) (mixed voices)

JFK: Well, I think we ought to -- just a second -- I'll just say, of course we ought to try to go the first route which you suggest. Get him back -- that's what our letter's doing -- that's what we're going to do by one means or another. But it seems to me we ought to have this discussion with NATO about these Turkish missiles, but more generally about sort of an up-to-date briefing about where we're going. Uh --

LBJ: We have two alternatives. Secretary McNamara suggests that we draft a message to the Turks and to the NATO people, saying that we will give you Polaris for the Jupiters in Turkey. And we're going to hit Cuba and therefore we ought to do this because then it means that you're safer than you would be. That's what he says. Ball takes the position that you shouldn't -- you should get something for your trade, if you're going to give up the Jupiter, why you ought to get him to take care of Cuba. (mixed voices)

LBJ: McCone's got one that lays down an ultimatum, that just says we're going to -- you shot down our man there, we're not going to take any more of it.

Voice: Well what do you do on Cuba, on that one?

Rusk: Mr. President, I think that the trouble with Ball's track is that their public statements today -- plane for plane, man for man, missile for missile...

Voice: Who said this?

Rusk: Ball's track -- a sort of acceptance in effect of their (word unclear) of this morning. It would just get us completely out of Turkey in every respect, and leave the Soviets very much in Cuba. It's the track of last night we want to get them back to. I think if we step up our action tomorrow, against Cuba, not against -- necessarily against the Soviet Union...
(mixed voices)

Dillon: Ambassador Thompson has another idea, was that instead of an ultimatum, a lot of talk about if you shoot any more of our unarmed planes, that it would probably be more effective and make more of an impression on him if we did do what we said we were going to do before and just go in and knock out just one SAM-site.

Voice: That would be the best way of impressing.
(mixed voices)

JFK: (words unclear) plane was shot down in Cuba?
(voice unclear)

Bundy: (one line censored)
(mixed voices)

Voice: Havana has announced it, that it was shot down by antiaircraft fire.

JFK: I didn't know that...(mixed voices) Well, we ought to get that and make sure that McNamara knows that
(mixed voices)

Thompson: I also think that we ought to -- if that Soviet ship comes in within this line we ought to stop it.
(Pause)

Voice: Do we have any idea what that ship's carrying?
(mixed voices -- pause)

JFK: In his messages this morning on Turkey did he say if we took out the missiles in Turkey he'd take out the missiles in Cuba?

Dillon: Yes, he said "analogous things" (mixed voices).

What we considered offensive and analogous means would have to come out of Turkey.

Thompson: "I therefore make this proposal. We agree to remove from Cuba those means which you regard as offensive means. We agree to see they carry this out and make (words unclear) the UN. Your representative will make a declaration to the effect that the U.S on its part will remove the similar means from Turkey. That's why I think it's very dangerous to indicate any incentive to play on this thing. (words unclear) -- as the Secretary says -- it's either/or (words unclear) We either get out of Turkey completely or we leave the Soviets in Cuba, and only missiles out.

Bundy: Well, we could make a counterproposal, obviously,...

Thompson: Yes.

Bundy: Get everything out of Cuba, and negotiate with the Turks with the same objective. (words unclear)

JFK: We can't very well invade Cuba with all its toil, and long as it's going to be, when we could have gotten them out by making a deal on the same missiles in Turkey. If that's part of the record I don't see how we'll have a very good war. (Pause) However that is really a question - uh - what to say to (words unclear).

LBJ: It wouldn't mean just (words unclear). He takes his missiles out of Cuba, he takes his men out of Cuba, he takes his planes out of Cuba, why then your whole foreign policy is gone. You take everything out of Turkey, 20,000 men, all your (word unclear), all your planes, all your missiles, and crumple.

Voice: This Turkey thing has been (words unclear)

Voice: ... get those missiles out of there.

Rusk: Last night he was prepared to trade them for (several words unclear)

LBJ: Somebody told him to try to get a little more (Pause, then discussion is desultory and not clear, but not on substance, for a minute.)

JFK: We've got two or three different proposals here, can we meet at nine o'clock and (words unclear) and everybody get a bite to eat, and then come back and see whether we send this message, we see about what we do about our plane, we see about our two messages to the UN -- I mean -- (words unclear) and we'll probably think about that and I think it would be better (noises) say nine o'clock?...

(Hubbub as meeting breaks up. Meeting resumes after passage of time -- length not clear from tape.)

[End Meeting Item 42.1]

Rusk: Certainly he's made a public speech on the subject. But -- uh -- we've also made some public speeches, and -- uh -- I think we're in such a confrontation that -- uh -- he's got to worry very much as the telegram last night that came in late obviously showed -- he's got to worry a great deal about how far he wants to push this thing. (words unclear) had good economic relations with the United States -- his relations with you -- the actual strategic situation -- uh -- I would think that tomorrow we take certain steps to build up the pressure -- we have the enforced surveillance; we shoot anybody who gets in our way; we see whether the town produces any result tonight for when we're here in the morning; we intercept that Soviet ship, we -- uh -- consider tomorrow afternoon including the oil in the blockade. (word unclear) In firing that goes on in Cuba, we keep the -- keep the focus on the Cubans. I had suggestions in John McCone's draft that would tend to do that -- the message to Khrushchev about the necessity for enforced surveys, that would keep the monkey on Cuba's back in this regard. If we do have to enforce our right to overfly and to have a look -- its an accidental fact that some Russian technicians may be around at the time we have to -- shoot, since they've already fired the first shot. (words unclear) It's something that is regrettable

but it's not something that we make a very public issue out of, we're enforcing this with respect to Cuba, not the Soviet Union -- the surveillance business.

Dillon: You do anything about the SAM-site that shot down our plane?

JFK: We don't know if it did yet, Doug.

(mixed voices)

Rusk: If we're going in tomorrow with - with the (words unclear) that we're going to enforce the right to surveillance.

Bundy: If we can't get assurances of allowing them to proceed (words unclear).

Mixed voices and question to Taylor: "Would you like to discuss"...

Taylor: The Chiefs have been -- I went back this (word unclear) and talked this over with the Chiefs. The problem of low level surveillance is becoming difficult because in all the flights today around the SAM-sites, the -- uh --, (words unclear), missile sites, there's low-level ack-ack. (mixed voices) Quite a bit. The planes returned (words unclear) the first to the missile sites and then the second turned back and cut out. We have some photography and I would say by tonight -- by the end of the day -- we probably have seen some of the dispositions around these sites. However the kind of (words unclear) very hard to pick up. Its very hard to know exactly where it is. (words unclear) So that by tomorrow I would say we're not ready to go back with armed reconnaissance preceding the actual photographic missions, if there's any hope of cleaning out this (words unclear). We think, however, the Chiefs would recommend, that we still go back with about six planes tomorrow, picking out targets which we don't know have this kind of flak around, to verify that the work is still going ahead, and also to prove we're still on the job. But we're approaching the point, I think, Mr. President, where low-level reconnaissance will be entirely impossible. When we reach that point, and if we're going to continue reconnaissance without actually taking out the whole works, we're faced with taking out a number of the SAM-sites that (several words unclear) medium and high-level reconnaissance. But low-level reconnaissance probably is on its way out, and I think we'll learn that tomorrow.

McNamara: I would add to that I don't believe we should carry out tomorrow's U-2 mission (mixed voices) The U-2 (mixed voices) but I do believe we should carry out the low-level reconnaissance with the necessary fighter escorts and preparations for following our reconnaissance, if it's attacked, with attack on the attackers.

Voice: You don't think that fighter escort on the low-level will help tomorrow?

Taylor: These planes are off the coast now, in case they have a cripple coming out, but (many words not clear)

Dillon: (Words unclear) I wasn't quite clear-- are the antiaircraft shooting at these things around the missile sites themselves?

Taylor: ... the vicinity of the missile sites
(mixed voices)

McNamara: Well, I think the point is that if our planes are fired on tomorrow, we ought to fire back. That's what I'd have the (mixed voices). The best indication of the antiaircraft sites that we have is around the missile sites (mixed voices)

Rusk: firing back at the missiles on the ground on the basis that you're firing back at....
(mixed voices)

JFK: Let me say, I think we ought to wait till tomorrow afternoon, to see whether we get any answer -- if U Thant goes down there -- we're rapidly approaching a real -- I don't think that firing back at a twenty millimeter coming off the ground is good. I think we ought to figure that Monday -- if tomorrow they fire at us, and we don't have any answer from the Russians, then Monday, it seems to me, we ought to -- we can consider making a statement tomorrow about the fire and that we're going to take action now any place in Cuba, on those areas which can fire, and then go in and take all the SAM-sites out. I'd rather take -- I don't think that it does any good to take out -- to try to fire at a twenty millimeter on the ground. You just hazard our planes, and the people on the ground have the advantage. On the other hand, I don't want to -- I don't think we do any good to begin to sort of half do it. I think we ought to keep tomorrow clean, do the best we can with the surveillance. If they still fire, and we haven't got a satisfactory answer back from the Russians then I think we ought to put a statement out tomorrow that we were fired upon, and we are therefore considering the island of Cuba as an open territory, and then take out all these SAM-sites. Otherwise what we're going to do is find this build-up of the -- of the protection for the SAM-sites, low, and the SAM-sites high -- and we'll find ourselves without -- our requirement will be so limited, that we'll find ourselves with all the disadvantages. I think we ought to, tomorrow -- let's get U Thant our messages -- take -- if they fire on us, tell them we'll take them all out and if we don't get some satisfaction from the Russians or U Thant or Cuba tomorrow night, figure that Monday we're going to do something about the SAM-sites. What do you think?

McNamara: (words unclear) I would say only that we ought to keep some kind of pressure on (words unclear) tomorrow night, that indicates we're (word unclear). Now if we call up these air squadrons tonight, I think that settles.
(mixed voices)

McNamara: I have a paper here (several words unclear) I believe we should issue an order tonight calling up the twenty-four air reserve squadrons, roughly 300 troop carrier transports, which are required for an invasion, and this would both be a

WEN -
J THANT -
BEFORE
ATTACKING
MONDAY..."

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